

Influencing UK Agricultural Policy: National Animal Welfare Strategy

Workshop summary- 21st of February 2018

Attending organisations

AHDB, APHA, DEFRA, Dove Farm Vets, CIWF, Coombe Farms, FSA, FAI farms, Organic Research Centre, Pasture Fed Livestock Association, pig, sheep and dairy producers, RAU, Red Tractor, RSPCA, RSPCA Assured, Save Our Antibiotics, Scottish Government, Soil Association, Synergy Farm Health, University of Bristol, University of Gloucester, Westpoint Vets, Welsh Government.

Key opportunities

The DEFRA's vision for 'food, farming and the environment post-Brexit' states '*We want high standards in animal welfare to be at the heart of a world-leading food industry*'. The UK has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and maintaining and enhancing this requires an ambitious animal welfare strategy that delivers a continuous improvement approach nationwide. A national animal welfare strategy provides a business opportunity to promote UK-produced livestock products at home and abroad. And recent animal welfare science to apply FAWC¹ good life opportunities in collaboration with farmers show that current support for higher animal welfare which includes positive welfare is both sustainable and achievable.

There is an opportunity for a genuine collaboration between government, industry and civil society organisations in developing this strategy. An RAU / University of Bristol policy workshop on 21st February 2018 that included over 50 representatives from government, industry, civil society organisations, academia and producers considered the opportunities for a national animal welfare strategy. The policy workshop participants identified a national animal welfare strategy should be: outcome based, meaningful, flexible, comprehensive, effective, transparent, collaborative, rewarding, positively incentivised, inclusive, achievable, realistic, implementable, evidence based, progressive, provide continuous improvement, animal focused, forward thinking, leading and sustainable.

This document summarises the initial discussions and ideas on the development of a national animal welfare strategy and illustrates how they relate to DEFRA's vision on the future for food, farming and the environment after Brexit. The workshop contributions are directly linked to the consultation questions and relevant text in DEFRA's Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit consultation report.

Key contributions

Consultation question: How can we best protect and promote our brand, remaining global leaders in environmental protection, food safety, and in standards of production and animal welfare?

Consultation text:

*'The public has an expectation of **high animal welfare standards** and consumers want to know what they are buying. We want to safeguard the welfare of our livestock, building our existing regulation for world leading standards. Rather than significantly raising the UK legislative baseline, we could pilot schemes that offer targeted payments to farmers who deliver higher welfare outcomes in sectors where animal welfare largely remains at legislative minimum.'*

Workshop participants' vision: *Pride in product and practice.*

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- 'Formal' recognition of stockmanship
- Use of positive language in external communication

¹ Farm Animal Welfare Committee (FAWC) Report on Farm Animal Welfare in Great Britain: Past, Present and Future, October 2009

- Change language used within farming industry from avoidance of harm to promotion of good / positive welfare
- Method of production/practice labelling
- Clearer communication of higher welfare scheme labelling
- Pride in product and practice farmer champions

Workshop participants' vision: ***Farmers motivated, valued and recognised.***

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Incentivising farmers in different ways - tap into intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation
- Encourage and recognise good life resources in existing schemes²
- Provide economic value of good/positive welfare matrix for assessment
- Understanding motivators to change/barriers to lasting change

Workshop participants' vision: ***National claim for higher animal welfare labelling certified by trusted farm assurance schemes.***

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- National animal welfare evidence base
- Must have sufficient higher welfare produce to sell
- Improve welfare regulations (stick)
- Transparency of animal welfare performance
- Export ideas; schemes selling animal welfare services abroad
- Bring together people and skills involved to export knowledge and solutions (business case scoping)

Workshop participants' vision: ***All stakeholders promote higher welfare UK animal products.***

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Shout to the world: high baseline, robust accreditation and evidence of positive welfare towards a good life
- Greater demand for UK products on national and international level
- Clear, concise understanding and communication of our USPs

Workshop participants' vision: ***Resisting trade pressure to accept lower welfare imports.***

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Match UK welfare standards for imports
- Animal welfare is seen an essential consideration in future trade deals
- Scoping studies to determine the effect of different border regulations (aw requirements) on likely imports
- Heavily tax lower welfare imports (that undermine UK standards, farmers and health)
- Discuss with WTO how animal welfare can be used within trade
- Audit (outsource) welfare standards from outside the UK, validated using welfare outcomes
- Citizen pressure for open transparent negotiations (prioritizing AW)

Consultation question: Should government set further standards to ensure greater consistency and understanding of welfare information at the point of purchase?

Consultation text:

*'We want to make sure our **high standards** are easily understood. Retailers and assurance schemes offer consumers a choice of products to different welfare standards. However, it is not always clear to the consumer what standards underpin welfare terminology; and definitions on labels, such as "grass fed", can vary between retailers. We are considering whether providing greater clarity of information to consumers could support **higher welfare production.**'*

² <http://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/3/3/584>

Workshop participants' vision: **UK consumers are the most informed on animal welfare.**

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Truthful labelling
- Clarity on how animal welfare is measured
- Use reward-welfare points when buying through loyalty schemes
- Point of sale materials to inform
- Supply chain transparency on welfare performance
- Agriculture education in schools
- Farming ambassadors + support to do so
- Connect citizens with farmers

Workshop participants' vision: **Farming sector effectively communicates positive messages.**

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Farmers having the skills to communicate their message
- Farmer defined language
- Positive language used in all parts of the supply chain
- Farmers communicate positive welfare

Consultation question: What type of action do you feel is most likely to have the biggest impact on improving animal health on farms?

Consultation text:

*'As well as maintaining **high standards** through appropriate regulation, we also propose to support industry initiatives to improve animal and plant health, including through better information-sharing.'*

*' Payments could also be made to farmers who trial a new approach or technology which could **improve welfare outcomes** but which is not an industry standard.'*

Note: Animal welfare is defined using the Five Freedoms (FAWC 2014)³ which includes Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease, hence intrinsically covers all aspects of animal health. The Five Freedoms are the cornerstone of government and industry policy and the Codes of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock.

Workshop participants' vision: **Bring the baseline up - raising welfare standards on farm.**

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Build upon the existing UK and EU legislation
- Support animal welfare research
- Incentivising farmers in different ways
- Benchmarking
- Incentivise farmers who/to provide positive welfare

Workshop participants' vision: **Collection of existing and new data to support higher welfare claim.**

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Open access
- Responsibility of independent national agency
- Evidence of positive welfare towards a good life
- Improve co-ordination between existing data sets = pool data

Workshop participants' vision: **Co-production and co-translation of animal welfare knowledge.**

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Facilitating community of innovative practice
- Promote good practice networks in animal welfare standards
- Public good = match funding between government, support actors and farmers

³ Farm Animal Welfare Council (2014) Evidence and Welfare of farmed animals. Part 1: the evidence base

Consultation question: How can we improve inspections for environmental, animal health and welfare standards?

Consultation text:

'During the 'agricultural transition' period, we want to seize the opportunity that leaving the EU offers to change the regulatory culture and provide a more integrated, appropriate and targeted enforcement system. With greater regulatory simplification at its heart, our new system will achieve environmental, animal health and welfare objectives and support farmers to uphold standards.'

Workshop participants' vision: **Support culture for struggling farms.**

Possible intervention strategies identified during the workshop were:

- Targeted support for the bottom 2-5% via data and inspection
- Self-auditing to promote mental well-being: e.g. LEAF
- Mental health support to farmers
- Remedial – positive direct action for struggling farm – motivational interviewing, 1 to 1 facilitation

Conclusion & Next steps

Maintaining the world-class reputation for quality is an important factor enabling UK agriculture to compete successfully on the world stage. There is an opportunity for UK agriculture's leadership to show commitment to protecting and promoting our brand and remaining world leaders in environmental protection, food safety and in standards of production and animal welfare.

Specifically it is proposed that a coalition of stakeholders should establish a policy initiative focused on supporting a common goal of **demonstrating and celebrating a UK claim for higher animal welfare**. The initiative could include a robust review of the evidence, facilitating action to maintain UK reputation in animal welfare and celebrating examples of success. We anticipate the initiative will bring together expertise from science, practice and policy. The initiative could be funded by sponsorship and support from a large number of organisations; government (UK & devolved), industry groups, civil society and research.

If you or your organization is interested in participating in this policy initiative please contact either David Main (David.Main@rau.ac.uk) or Lisa Williams van Dijk (Lisa.WilliamsvanDijk@rau.ac.uk)